



# THE TIVVY BUZZETTE

The Newsletter of Tiverton Beekeepers – May 2020

Tiverton Beekeepers are a branch of the Devon Beekeepers Association Registered Charity No 270675



## AROUND THE APIARY – MAY

The end of March was excellent for beekeeping and April has also turned out very good, good for the bees and the beekeeper. I have been able to check all my hives and put my first supers on. For early April my bees look strong and have plenty of stores. Providing you give the bees space in the brood box for the queen to lay and space in the super for honey and nectar storage this is about the best you can do to reduce the risk of swarming. Most hives will now have drones a plenty just waiting for a chance to be off after a virgin queen. By May I expect quite a lot of my hives will have a second super on them.

I am often asked "How do you find a queen?" Remove any supers with as little disturbance as possible, that goes for smoke as well. Remove the queen excluder, looking on the underside for the queen. Next remove the dummy board and lift the first brood frame, it will probably only have honey stored but not always. Having put the frame to one side, I put mine between the two hives on the stand, remove the next frame which may well have sealed or open brood, scan along the bottom of the frame, then around the sides and top before scanning across the middle. If the queen is not seen then reverse the frame and check starting at the bottom again. Put the frame back in the box if not found and check the next frame. Do not be tempted to shake the bees off the frame. Frames that are all covered in sealed or open brood are not so likely to have the queen on them – the most likely frames are the ones with eggs and open brood. If you do not spot the queen then work back through the frames but if you still cannot find her close the hive up again and try another day. It takes a lot of practice to find queens and I have had hives that have gone through the whole season and I haven't seen the queen!

Key points in finding the queen? Where should she be – close to where the eggs are found - not on frames of sealed brood or honey stores. Keep calm and don't stir the bees up with smoke or rough handling.

May is a good time to change old brood frames - for bees to produce wax they need a good supply of honey or sugar syrup. Queens love neat foundation to lay in. From egg to a working, food gathering bee takes six weeks. The hardworking bees you need in July to give you a good honey crop are the bees raised in mid to late May.

Keith Owers



## 'Grandad' - 'What Did You Do During Lockdown?'

### 'I Built A Bee-Vac – V3!'

# 'A WHAT?'

There are two types of honey bees:

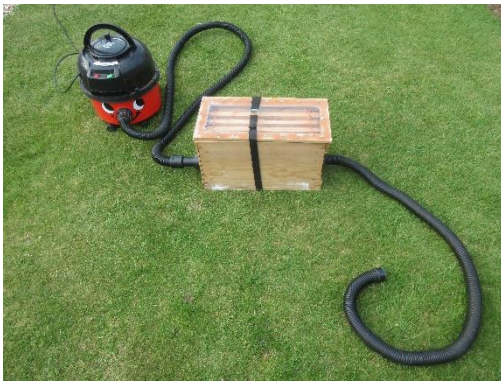
1. helpful ones who swarm onto a branch, onto a hedge or even into an empty hive!
2. unhelpful ones, who choose a tall tree, a hollow tree trunk, a chimney, a gap in a stone wall or some other awkward place.

Two years ago, a colony of honey bees had decided to re-home themselves into an old cast-iron pipe 7 feet up, in the side of a stone built 2 storey house. Fortunately for the bees, the owners liked honey bees, but unfortunately the bees had chosen a pipe 3 feet from the front door and the owners were running a bed and breakfast business. Their visitors were not impressed!

I tried several ways of trying to coax the bees out – round one to the bees!

It was then that I decided to build a Bee-Vac.

#### 'Version – V1'



Basically, this uses a vacuum to Hoover the bees out, but, most importantly, doesn't hurt the bees!

It consists of 3 parts: a vacuum, a nuc-box and the hose to Hoover up the bees.

Mr. Henry was a good start, but he had to be controlled. I then needed a container which I could adapt with the hose from Mr Henry at one end, creating a vacuum, and at the other end, a hose to suck the bees into the box!

That sounds easy and just as I was putting it together I had a call from a lovely old lady living in a bungalow saying she was afraid to leave her home because there were bees all over her hedge in the front garden surrounding her entrance/exit gate. I went to see her with the idea it was a swarm of honey bees which I could hive easily. When I arrived, there were literally hundreds of bumble bees all over the hedge and gate.

We normally leave bumbles alone, but this was a different situation, the lady was scared to leave her house. I came home collected the Bee-Vac, hoovered up most of the bumble bees and took them to Knightshayes.

Unfortunately, when I tried hoovering up smaller insects like wasps it failed. I did not want to test it on honey bees. They were too small, and I needed more suction which I could control – very important if I was not to hurt them!

So, in lockdown I have made 'Version - V2' where the suction could be regulated with a control valve and not do any harm to the honey bees.



This was lighter to carry, did what it was meant to do and had a lightweight **Cordless Version – V3.**

Derek EVANS



### **LANGSTROTH HIVES WITH BEES FOR SALE**

**Six good Langstroth hives with bees  
Complete with queen excluders and two supers.  
£300.00 each.  
Contact Keith Owers on 01884 254977  
Email [keithowersbees@gmail.com](mailto:keithowersbees@gmail.com)**



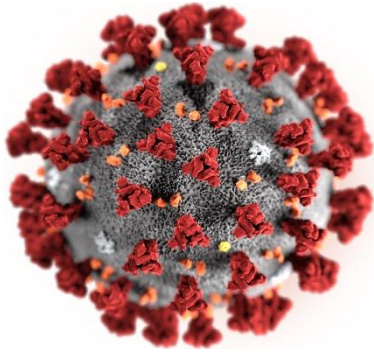
*The British Beekeepers Association*

## **BBKA Overwinter Survival Survey for 2019-2020**

Liegh Sidaway (General Manager) has asked if we can get as many members as possible to fill out the BBKA Winter Survival Survey as the more feedback they get the better the picture they can build as to the status of our bee colonies in Spring 2020.

<https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=158192743510>

Thank you for taking the time to take part.



## **CORONA VIRUS NEWS FOR BEEKEEPERS**

In view of the current situation, I have obtained the following guidance from the Bee Farmers Association.

As beekeepers, please be aware of the following guidance when looking after your honey bees.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), ask you as beekeepers to be responsible and to ensure that you continue good beekeeping practices, effective stock management and health checks while observing the government's guidance on COVID-19.

You should follow public health guidance on social distancing. Everyone, including beekeepers should avoid gatherings of more than two people and this includes at your apiary. You should maintain a distance of two metres between yourself and others to limit the spread of COVID-19.

General advice for beekeepers is as follows:

You should continue to work and care for your animals in the normal manner, as far as possible. You should not take measures that compromise the welfare of the animals in your care.

You should maintain good biosecurity at your apiary.

You should not share beekeeping equipment with other beekeepers, particularly hive tools and other handheld devices and protective clothing.

In line with the general advice on COVID-19, you should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and hot water before and after you come into contact with any animal. Use hand sanitiser if that is all you have access to.

There are currently no restrictions on the movements of bee colonies. However you should observe the public health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 when carrying out these activities, including the guidance on social distancing.

If you are required to visit premises other than your own, you should familiarise yourself with the public health guidance on infection prevention and control and take measures to minimise the risks from contaminated surfaces.

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, you should be self-isolating at home and should not be visiting other premises. Ideally, another beekeeper should take on this duty wherever possible. (contact me if this situation occurs)

You should report any suspicion of notifiable diseases or pests to the authorities in the usual way.

You should use husbandry techniques to minimise swarming. If you have to respond to collect a swarm you need to ensure that you use the guidelines on social distancing when collecting the swarm. If that is not possible, then the swarm should not be collected. Therefore, trying to prevent swarms is the best approach.

Malcolm Crook



### **Asian Hornet Spring 2020 update**

Monday 13 to Thursday 30 April 2020 has been the designated period for the spring monitoring season. Suterra had been chosen as the attractant of choice by the BBKA before Covid-19 became a reality. So, home stay lockdown and homemade attractant recipes are the main features of this monitoring period.

I have used both the saucer and wick methods with differing types of attractant – based on store cupboard availability. With the long period of sunshine, occasional chill winds and small rainfall I have monitored on a number of days and at different times of the day.

Suffice to say my camellia bushes, dandelions, yellow cotoneaster, laurel hedge, apple trees, pear trees, cherry trees and plum trees have all been magnets for a plethora of insect life. I have been able to observe honey bees, 7 species of solitary bee, 7 species of bumble bee, wasps (common, median and paper), 5 species of hoverfly and butterflies all feasting on my blooms.

They have all studiously ignored my monitoring stations, even the wasps! So, my stations have attracted no wasps or hornets – European (*Vespa crabro*) or Asian (*Vespa velutina*). Time of day made no difference, a big fat zero recording.

Actually, I'm not down hearted as negative results are just as important as positive ones in any scientific study. As my email has not become red hot with sightings, I guess my results mirror many of our members. In one sense I'm relieved as having to physically verify and track a positive sighting would have been extremely difficult during the lockdown orders.

I am grateful to those of you who have kindly sent in details of your monitoring station positions and type of station used. So that we can have a full picture of how members went about monitoring and recorded results I would like members to send the following details to me please:

- Name,
- date of set up or date of monitoring,
- wick or saucer station,
- type of attractant,
- post code,
- What3words code,
- monitoring result. Negative or positive

Any other information of what you observed or even a photograph of an observed insect (identified or not) would be appreciated.

I will be using this data to produce a map of stations, types and observations for spring 2020 – all data will be anonymised so that members identities and addresses are protected. I will be using a cloud database piece of software Epicollect5 to process all the data. Once all results are in and processed, I will publish the overall map.

Look forward to receiving your data either now or after 30 April 2020, whichever is more convenient.

I am indebted to John Knowles who emailed me with details of a prototype camera recording trap / station which utilised a Raspberry Pi micro computer and a digital camera. As an insect landed on the focused target area it was automatically recorded on the camera. This is an interesting development in remote monitoring. No doubt John will inform us all once his prototype has been proofed as to the efficacy of such a device.



### Request for Helpers – Asian Hornet Team

This exercise has made me reflect how the branch can grow an Asian Hornet Team which involves as many members as possible based upon their strengths, skills and availability. Just like our bees who have designated roles and functions throughout their lives rather than doing every job at once so that the hive functions efficiently, it seems prudent to adopt a similar approach.

There seems to be two distinct functions to the Asian Hornet team namely **monitoring** and **finding**.

Finding is akin to biological fieldwork while monitoring is akin to the lab-based work.

**Finding** is basically tracking – monitoring station set up on site, map survey, triangulation of sites, tracking hornets to the nest, working with the NBU. This is more suited to those members who are able to get out and about and not unduly time constrained.

**Monitoring** is making and designing stations / bait stations / traps, sourcing and testing attractants, identifying insects from images, verifying identifications, recording data, analysing the data, being a first responder to public queries. These positions are more suited to members who have a fixed amount of time, are happier to use electronic means of contact and communication or have skills in making and trialling equipment.

Both functions are seasonal and reactive to the number and volume of sightings so occasional spikes of demand.

Hence in the first instance to get a snap shot of members preference, would people be kind enough to email me:

- subject heading '**TBKA AHT roles**',
- including your name,
- whether a finder or monitor type of first responder,
- and the types of job (outlined above) with which you would be willing to be involved.

The more people that take up the various roles the less arduous it will be for individuals and enable us to become an example to other branches in how to respond to the threat of the Asian Hornet.

Gavin Nuttall-Owen    AHAT Coordinator    [ahat@tivertonbeekeepers.uk](mailto:ahat@tivertonbeekeepers.uk)

# APIARY NEWS – THE THREE SUPER HIVE



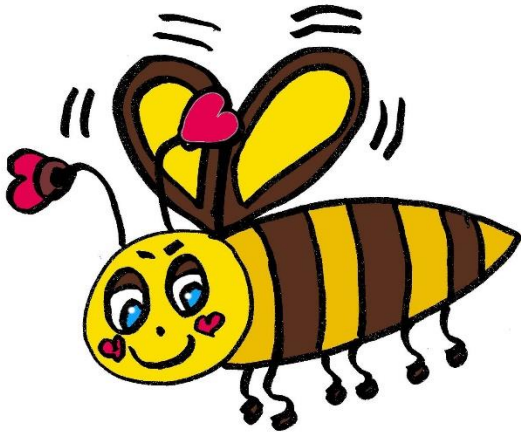
At the end of last season, the club was left with an experimental colony consisting of three equal size boxes, placed on top of each other, similar to a Warre hive, at the apiary. The containers being used in this instance were National supers. Ideally all the colonies would need to be in a conventional set up for teaching purposes, and so it was decided that the colony should go through the winter in this set up, and to be sorted out in the spring. On 4<sup>th</sup> March this year, the colonies were checked for food etc, and it was noticed that this hive was so strong, it was bulging with bees. The only option at this stage was to give them more room, so another National super was added, now making four. We did manage to separate the bottom two supers with a queen excluder to try and contain her majesty. At the end of March the weather was getting warmer and the colonies were growing, so on 6<sup>th</sup> April the time had come to change the colony set up. Keith Owers, Tony Lindsell and myself took up the challenge. Keith suggested moving the hive to one side, placing a new floor and brood box with new frames and foundation on the original site. This would remove all the flying bees and make finding the queen so much easier. So, observing the social distancing rules, we each took a super and the search began. The removal of the flying bees did help, but she was not to be seen. Three older beekeepers, eyesight issues etc, it was simple. We all searched the other supers, eggs all over the place, but she was still not seen. One and a half hours later, the score was queen – one, so called beekeepers – nil. We managed to find another queen excluder, so the hive was rebuilt and placed back on to its original site. Round two. Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April, the three of us return with a plan!! “ Let’s find her, mark her, job done” So, this time, Tony is attacking everything growing with his hedge trimmer, Keith and I start the job of going through the frames. We took two supers each and with the help of placing the queen excluders in first it was easier to find the frames with eggs in so she must be in either of those two supers. Progress. Back through the frames again, and the wonderful moment when Keith says “there she is!! Brilliant! Let’s mark her – quick!” Being a super frame doesn't give Keith much time to catch her before she has run across the comb and onto the other side. He's done it, he has her!! The score surely now has got to be Queen – nil, beekeepers – one? NO, as Keith is getting her into position to mark her she escapes and drops back into the super.

Back through the frames again, TWICE. Nothing, so another one and a half hours later, she had made the score queen – two so called beekeepers – nil.

So, we rebuilt the hive again!!

TO BE CONTINUED!!

Malcolm Crook



### **These 13 Facts Cover Some Of The Basic Functions And Traits Of Your Average Bee.**

Courtesy of <https://ecobnb.com/blog/2019/09/kid-friendly-bee-facts/>

1. Bees have five eyes and six legs
2. Honey bees live in hives (or colonies). The members of the hive are divided into three types: Queen, Workers, and Drones.
3. There are more than 20,000 species of bees.
4. Bees can see all colors except red. That and their sense of smell help them find the flowers they need to collect pollen.
5. The average beehive can house around 50,000 bees.
6. Each bee has 170 odorant receptors, which means they have one serious sense of smell.
7. Worker bees go from one flower to another, collecting nectar. In one collection trip, a bee visits 50 to 100 flowers.
8. Carpenter bees create tunnels that usually look about one or two inches deep, but they can be up to 10 feet long.
9. The queen bee lays all of the eggs in a colony. At the height of the season, she may lay over 2,500 eggs per day.
10. Honey bees are great flyers. They fly at a speed of around 25km per hour and beat their wings 200 times per second.
11. It takes 21 days for an egg to develop into an adult bee.
12. Honey bees pollinate more than 100 different crops in the U.S.
13. Over the past 15 years, colonies of bees have been disappearing, and the reason remains unknown. In some regions, up to 90% of bees have disappeared.

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